



NARRATIVE IDENTITY AND TRAUMA EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT REFUGEES

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the reconstruction of the multidimensional configuration of young people's identities against the background of their own experiences as refugees. For this, deep hermeneutic interviews were conducted with two (ethnically) Afghan brothers who together, fled to Germany and thereupon, were evaluated within the context of the setting. Of particular importance was the question as to how far key experiences of life itself are already formative, or only through the conscious reflection, at a formative moment of the narrative traced biography. In this context, identity is understood as a fixed and dynamic concept that permanently interacts with the world. Subsequent to the comparison of the self-narratives of the two brothers in terms of their similarities and differences, in an initial implementation, an attempt will be made to reveal the interaction of the constitution of identity among refugees as well as the constitution of identity among the heterogeneous, imaginary host society.

KEYWORDS: Identity, narrative self, narration, migration, refugees, intercultural education.

Reference and positioning within the scope of the current discussion concerning migration and identity

Identity, what is it? It describes an innate bundle of traits and is already fixed? Or it is to be understood as a dynamic process? Can it be so well established at a certain point in time that it does not continue to change? In the face of the global political situation, a large number of individual fates are reflected, which often remain unnoticed in broader discussions. But what do their experiences mean to the refugees themselves? How should the entire process of fleeing be grasped and reconstructed from the internal perspective, and what change of identity does the reflection of that which has already been experienced bring with it? This work tries to understand these multi-dimensional aspects of a life story, in that it details the lives of two, originally Afghan brothers, who fled from Iran to Germany, and tries to conduct a kind of deep hermeneutic analysis of the individual identity-related considerations of the two men.

Particularly in view of current social processes which reflect express significant tension between own self and the foreigner, it is essential to level the perspectives of minorities and majorities in the sense that the people designated as refugees are given the opportunity of self-expression, so these are not just any subaltern social structures which fall victim to the eyes of today's media-tangled world and reform over and over again. It is this self-expression which, in this sense, can provide both object and scientific knowledge about constitutive identity processes in the postmodern age.

Methodology for recording the self-narrative which is relevant to identity. The theoretical basis of the work is to provide an overview of the fate of refugees, something which is indispensable for a sophisticated understanding. The basic assumption of this work is the phenomenological meaning of the categories of time and space for the flight of a person who, in many respects, is considered to have undergone extreme shaping of biographical change processes in life (cf. Volkan, 2002). Within these categories, there are respective tensions which, in the temporal context, arise cognitively out of pluralism, however above all, there are emotionally constructed pasts, presents and the future which, in a spatial perspective, arise out the duality of own self and the stranger.

The interviews are designed to trace the emergence and consolidation of narrative identity and bring these into contexts that are expressed by the portrayal of young people in stages, even if these people are not always fully aware of them (cf. Zimmermann, 2012). Where in general, as a result of the circumstances of a flight, the retrospectively constructed individual image almost exclusively depends on the outlook of the specific respondents, here, a special and enriching methodological possibility might be that the views of the two brothers complement each other and correlate. As such, the same experiences and circumstances are accompanied and recapitulated by two different perspectives so that at the end, the expected result of the work will be portrayed by an extension to the findings.

We proceed on the basis that identity is a permanently and exclusively procedural image is that is a constant exchange with the surroundings and the environment.

It can therefore be expected that the two brothers represent essential poles of orientation for each other. It is crucial that the identity, in the dynamic form which we try to grasp it today, has already been shaped by the past and expresses a certain direction of orientation and often describes a regressive tendency to the past or a progressive tendency to future (cf. Dörpinghaus / Uphoff, 2012). However, the dimensions of own self and the stranger cannot be distinguished in a way that is any more clear-cut than the dimensions of the past, the present and the future, which respectively influence each other. Because identity arises, as is assumed for the reasons disclosed in this multidimensional empirical and reflexive exchange of being, an attempt has been made to capture the individual layers in a hermeneutic approach. The different levels are arranged in a form that allows a continuous access to the emotions which are essential for identity, so that the interviews, in the way they are designed, span time and space, in a kind of gentle narrative:

1. The perception of the situation in the present
2. The perception of the situation in the past
3. The perception of self in the past
4. The perception of self in the present
5. The perception of self for the future
6. Assumed situation in the future

The significance of the respective temporal and spatial framework should be measured on the basis of the scope of the respective portrayals and the intensity of the emotional and scene-based parts. In order to enable this interpretive process, one must succeed in gaining a reflexive approach to the various aspects of life of the two brothers, in which the key stories and feelings of the two are made tangible in terms of scenes. For this purpose, five different subject areas were crystallised. In later threads, reference will be made to the different temporal and spatial dimensions through questions:

- A. School and training
- B. Friendship and relationships
- C. Family and marriage
- D. Identity and culture
- E. Flight and coping with trauma

Insights concerning constitutive identity processes as a result of the biographical research

As such, the concept of interviews seems to justify the circumstances. This is because in two respects, a profound and differentiated approach to the essential identity characteristics was successful: In the first this was done through the hermeneutical shift from the external and internal perception, which the brothers slowly led to in the reflective moment of the interview, wherein as a result of the constant approach, it was possible to avoid overburdening confrontation. On the other hand, this was done in a temporal sense which, from the present, has allowed implementation to the past and finally, an outlook to the future. This allows for a dynamic to be created through the repetition of the concept in each individual thematic field, creating a space for further revelations. As such, the

identity of the two brothers could be understood in terms of how it came about procedurally. In comparison, it was clear that both are consistent and meaningful, despite significant differences in their perception.

At this point, the assumption is disclosed that in people, it is not just a *tabula rasa*, which is confronted, entirely blank with the experience of one's life. Moreover, Günther Bittner's perspective of a protosubject is adopted, in which the assumption is made that unconscious working models are already formed from the primary experience of life, which are supported in the further course of life, so that on the basis of this primary and more subliminal consciousness other experiences are pre-sorted on a pre-reflective basis, something which, in moment of happening, have an impact on the perception of these experiences (cf. Bittner, 2011). The conscious reflection as such, is then already coloured by the perception of experiences that serve as a kind of staging of the subliminal protosubject which is affirmative and set in unnoticed and meaningful logical barriers. In many ways, particularly in an intense experience such as fleeing, the identitarian references break apart, however they also open up a space for reflexive change. In connection with this, it seems as if such an external force would either shatter the identitarian references or even join them in its power, by rising up against the external circumstances. Both of these cases are represented by the two brothers and are meaningful and comprehensible. This model explains why nevertheless, despite apparently almost congruent biographies, the unconscious key incidents that reveal themselves through the scenic descriptions of the self-narrative impact in such a way, that one projects partly diametrical parts of the self.

Here a reflexive approach to the experienced can be in the two brothers, wherein the associative references to their own biography are neither established in the same form, nor to the same intensity. Both identities have their meaningful justification in the sense that they consistently bear the experiences of one's own life. This can apply to us as proof that there cannot be a wrong or right related in connection with the understanding of identity. The relevant question for the work is whether it is more the reflection or the experience that has the character forming the identity. This answers to this are similar to those of Bittner, to the effect that both are parts which ultimately lead to an identity-based self-understanding of a person.

The experiences and moments of life flow through a person's conscious and unconscious parts like a prism. Depending on this perspective formation of the subject that already exists, a unique identity breaks as an entirely individual form where the aforementioned experiences pervade the individual. As such, in each person, the same experiences are fractured differently, as if it were in a different light, however also, this always depends on the existing awareness. Thus, in each most similar experience of the world, there are countless different experiences which in turn, are instrumental in forming identity.

As such, identity is not seen as rigid, but represents a positioning to the world, which very clearly shows that fleeing, as well as migration in general, is one of the culmination points of our time (cf. Zirfas / Jörissen, 2007). The importance of reflection is expressed in dealing with the psychological traumas. Life cannot be regarded as a behavioural therapy which is liberated from its formal anchoring. Moreover, in cases of such deep-seated strains in terms of identity or mental strains, a pedagogical and professional reflexive working is required based on gaining an understanding for their own lives (cf. Becker, 2000; Weiß, 2003 / 2013). It is just at this point that Gestalt pedagogy can be used as an approach.

In terms of their emotional anchor, the key moments of a life are largely independent of cultural backgrounds as they capture dimensions of experience based on emotions. They are therefore communicable and also communicable across cultural boundaries, so that on the basis of a reflection on these key moments in life, it is possible to arrive at another, deeper understanding of these people. We observe this very clearly in intimate relationships. At the same level, in what is now a partly, enormously polarised society, we are able to do this for example, through a reconstruction of the biographies of refugees. Only this interplay between the self and the other breaks the boundaries, which unfortunately, still exist too often between society and the refugees.

The narrative of this age, as a result of reflection of the biographies and fates of refugees must also find a place in the understanding of our culture, just like all other blueprints that affect our social identity. We are not alone, and we should not pretend to be so, but instead reach out and give the refugees not only a physical space, but also provide an internal space in the understanding of our culture as a whole and in the understanding every individual. This objective is clear from the experiences of the two brothers and from studying the nature of identity.

Opportunities and challenges for attachment

The world is becoming increasingly globalised, something which causes people to fear an estrangement of their own identity. Here, education which solely relates to an own culture can no longer represent a suitable model for educating people as a moral being based on an identity, as the responsibility / personal responsibility of people also pushes beyond individually perceived cultural constructs into the entire world. In connection with this, Gestalt pedagogy is especially called for, because understood as humanistic pedagogy, it realises the objective of promoting responsibility / personal responsibility. What is significant here is the fact that, in the face of globalisation we sometimes feel as if we

know all about our surroundings, as it is our omnipresent in the media, yet we are partly filled with deep skepticism if we meet the 'foreign' in real life (cf. Waldenfels, 2006). Intercultural education is therefore asked to, and called upon to extend the understanding of self. The way in which this interplay can succeed is of great importance as naturally, it does not mean a break with the current constitution, but moreover, its extension, in the sense that a deep awareness of human rights is created, which has already been achieved for decades. Gestalt pedagogy is not only characterised interculturally, but also in terms of political education. In and through this discourse, pedagogical Gestalt studies can regain its political and socio-critical potential in the 21st century.

For psychoanalysis, the examination of this discourse provides an opportunity for the discipline to position itself in the public debate as a political science which, among the many loud voices of the age, raises its socio-critical voice. Even a return to revolutionary psychoanalysis and/or character analysis and/or vegetotherapy of Wilhelm Reich can help revitalise the socio-critical and subversive potential of psychoanalysis (cf. Peglau, 2013). In the discourse surrounding the refugees in German and European society, voices belonging to the field of depth psychology appear valuable and make sense. Psychoanalytic criticism in the discourse surrounding inclusion, which also includes people who fled, should not remain a blunted scalpel (cf. Bittner, 2016).

Of course, there are countless other questions that one can ask in this regard, and innumerable tasks that one would have to do. The important thing is to recognise the changes and movements in the global understanding of our age, not only as a wake-up call and a big job, but also, equally, as a great opportunity. This view is supported by a variety of people who perform important intercultural work and not run away from requirements, but set them. The work described here should be understood as a modest attempt to emulate these dedicated people.

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